



Dear Neighbor,

Representing your interests in the Florida Senate continues to be a welcome challenge and a rewarding privilege. I appreciate your support and confidence as the Legislature continues to meet the diverse needs of our rapidly growing state. I'm glad to have returned home and am proud to report to you the achievements of the 2003 Legislative Session.

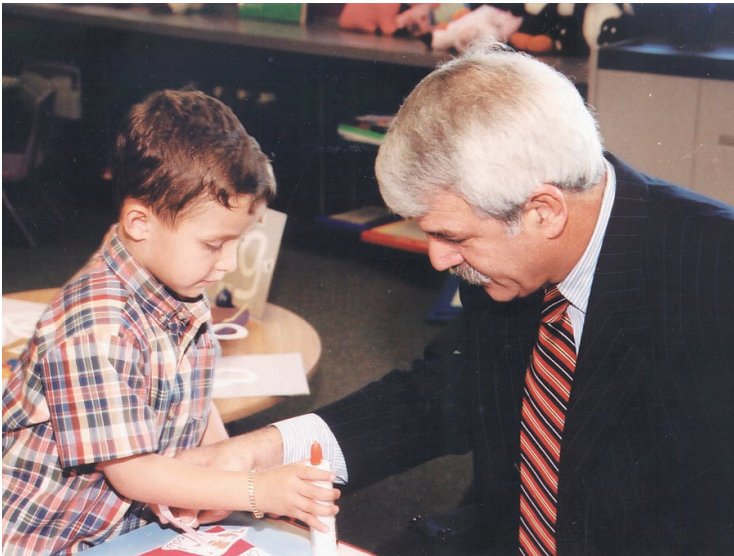
While the multitude of complex issues confronted by this Legislature created a demanding set of circumstances under which to work, we met the test with resolve and compassion and were able to increase education funding, bring stability to Florida's insurance markets, ensure public safety by increasing penalties for criminals, and implement a number of voter mandated constitutional amendments.

The Florida Legislature made great strides towards improving the quality of life in our great state; however, our work remains unfinished. Continued communication and feedback with you and others in the community is vital in order to evaluate and improve upon our work.

Your thoughts and concerns are of great importance to me. Please feel free to contact my office if we can be of assistance in any way. We are here to serve you!

Sincerely,

Burt L. Saunders
Senator, District 37



A visit with a first grade student at Manatee Elementary School.



Addressing a group of senior citizens at Heron House about senior issues.



Groundbreaking ceremony for the first Everglades Restoration Program construction project, with Governor Jeb Bush and the Under Secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Class Size Reduction

During the General Election of 2002, Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment to reduce the number of students in the classroom. The estimated cost of implementing the class size reduction is \$27 billion over eight years. The Senate remains committed to addressing the full implementation of the amendment to reduce class size. The 2003 legislation focused on providing flexibility for local school districts and created an accountability system to ensure adequate implementation. We also set up funding mechanisms necessary for full implementation by providing \$464 million this year to begin the process, and \$600 million more for classroom construction.

Everglades Protection

The "River of Grass" carries international significance as home to a stunning diversity of plants and animals, including rare and endangered species. Unfortunately, years of disruption to the natural water flow and invasion of pollutants from outside sources, have endangered our valuable Everglades. Understanding the importance of preserving this natural resource and its inhabitants for present and future generations, the Legislature passed reforms to ensure that the storm-water discharged into the Everglades Protection Area must meet state water quality standards no later than December 31, 2006. This legislation, along with the 1999 Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), consisting of a series of environmental improvements over 40 years, with an estimated cost of \$8.2 billion, illustrates our continued commitment to ensuring the protection of our state's natural resources.

Prescription Drugs

Every month, too many of our seniors make the painful choice between buying their prescription drugs or buying groceries or paying rent. The Legislature took several steps to make prescription drugs more affordable. In order to significantly expand the popular Silver Saver Program, benefiting Medicare individuals with incomes up to 200% of the federal property level, the Legislature created the Lifesaver Rx Drug Prescription Program. This new program provides necessary prescription drug savings to more seniors, as well as creates the Sunshine for Seniors Program to assist low income seniors with obtaining prescription drugs through manufacturers' pharmaceutical assistance programs. The Legislature additionally urged the United States Congress to enact financially sustainable outpatient prescription drug coverage as part of the Federal Medicare Program to improve quality care and help seniors live longer, healthier lives.

Alzheimer's Disease

The Legislature also demonstrated its commitment to providing quality care for individuals plagued with Alzheimer's disease. Due to the degenerative nature of this disease, it is often difficult for family members and loved ones to care for those diagnosed with this progressive, irreversible brain disorder. Oftentimes, family members turn to home health agencies and adult day care centers to provide care for their loved ones. To ensure that those suffering with Alzheimer's or dementia related disorders receive effective, quality care, the Legislature adopted reforms mandating that all employees interacting with Alzheimer's patients must receive training in order to care for the patients.

Workers' Compensation Reform

Seeking to improve the accessibility and affordability of workers' compensation coverage, assure adequate benefits for injured workers, reduce fraud, and increase system efficiency, the Legislature passed a comprehensive workers' compensation package addressing the needs of both employers and employees. A new tier of coverage was created within the Workers' Compensation Joint Underwriting Association (JUA) to provide more affordable means of coverage for businesses unable to acquire coverage in the voluntary market. Also, by increasing death benefits for dependents of employees, increasing allowable funeral expenses, and increasing treatments for injured workers, the Legislature delivered long awaited benefits to Florida's workforce. As a result of this legislation, the state Office of Insurance Regulation has mandated premium reductions, requiring insurance companies selling workers' compensation policies to drop their premiums by an average 14 percent. The Chief Financial Officer has estimated that the rate changes, which took effect Oct. 1 for new and current policies, will cut costs for insured Florida businesses by \$420 million.

Medical Malpractice Reform

The Legislature also celebrated a recent victory with the successful passage of a comprehensive medical malpractice reform package which allows for continued access to quality health care for Floridians. The medical malpractice reform package has three main parts: Litigation Reform, Quality of Care Reform, and Insurance Reform. In recognition of the fact that malpractice begins with the physician, we created drastic quality of care and physician discipline reforms to improve the health care system that Floridians rely upon. In an effort to grant immediate financial relief for physicians, we froze malpractice insurance premiums at those rates approved on or before July 1, 2003. The critical insurance reform provision will keep Florida doctors from leaving the state due to continual increases in insurance premiums. Insurance companies have said that they need some predictability and certainty in regards to the claims they can expect. We gave them that with a cap on non-economic damages, such as pain and suffering.

Biotechnology Research and Development

Senate bill 6E was approved by the Legislature during a special session called by Governor Bush, laying the framework for The Scripps Research Institute to expand its world-renowned scientific research and endeavors into the Sunshine State. Scripps Florida will create unprecedented economic and educational opportunities in Florida, and propel the state to the forefront of biomedical research and discovery. A total of \$310 million in federal stimulus funds will be appropriated to the Governor's Office of Tourism, Trade, and Economic Development (OTTED) to cover the start-up operations of the Scripps Florida campus during the first seven years. In addition to the jobs directly created by Scripps Florida, economists estimate there will be an additional 44,000 jobs as a result of the industry clustering that is expected to take place surrounding the Scripps Florida nucleus.

Legislative Session 2004 • Pre-Session Survey

Constituent input and public feedback are the cornerstones of my decision making process as I represent you in Tallahassee. As we approach the 2004 Legislative Session, I would like to hear from you regarding the issues that matter most to our community and to you. Please complete the survey below and return it to my office. I look forward to hearing from you!

Education

1. Currently, there are several school voucher programs that assist low income families and families with disabled children in providing a quality education for their children. Do you support the continued use of such programs and vouchers in Florida?

2. Currently, unclaimed lottery prizes are used for additional promotions and prizes in order to increase overall revenue. Do you agree with this current policy?

3. Since 1997, the Bright Futures Scholarship Program has assisted thousands of Florida students in their efforts to pursue a higher education. Do you think the standards for qualifications should be increased in an effort to decrease the number of participants, therefore reducing the financial burden of the state to providing higher education funding for students?

4. Given the \$27 billion price tag associated with implementing the Class Size Reduction Amendment approved by the voters in 2002, do you favor continued implementation of reducing the number of students in Florida's classrooms? Do you favor a partial repeal of the amendment for grades 4-12?

Healthcare

5. Do you currently have health insurance coverage?_____

6. Is your health insurance coverage part of an employer plan?_____

7. Do you consider your health insurance to be affordable?_____

8. Which is better for you: lower premiums with higher deductibles and co-payments, or higher premiums with lower deductibles and co-payments?_____

Constitutional Amendment Reform

9. Would you support an alternative way of proposing citizen initiatives that doesn't involve amending Florida's Constitution, such as amending the Florida Statutes?

10. Do you think it should be more difficult for citizens to amend Florida's Constitution, such as restricting the subject of the amendment, or requiring a supermajority vote for approval?

Children and Families

11. Do you agree with the recent Florida Supreme Court ruling that parents do not have a right to notification of a minor daughter's intent to have an abortion?

12. Should elderly drivers be allowed to carry a driver's license without periodic testing? What should the criteria be in determining who is and who is not a safe driver?

General Government

13. Some areas of the state of Florida are experiencing a water shortage. This will prove to be a contentious issue as different areas of the state battle for access to water resources. What are your thoughts on addressing this issue in a fair and equitable manner?

14. Do you support efforts to repeal the 1998 voter-approved constitutional amendment mandating a High-Speed Rail to connect the major metropolitan areas of the state?

Thank you for your time and for your thoughts and ideas. Please return this survey via the U.S. Postal Service to:

Senator Burt Saunders
3301 East Tamiami Trail, Suite 304
Naples, Florida 34112-4902

OR

Senator Burt Saunders
1039 S.E. 9th Place, Suite 310
Cape Coral, Florida 33990-3095